

PERSONAL AND EFFECTUAL CALLING

NO. 2359

A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
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"He calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out."
John 10:3

IF you were near an Eastern village, you would probably see a large square, walled about with stones rolled roughly one upon another. You would also see a gate, and perhaps more than one entrance into this enclosure. The square is empty through the day, for the flocks have gone into the neighboring pastures, but towards evening, at certain seasons of the year, all the shepherds bring their flocks to these enclosures and there they are shut in for the night all together. One man has but a few sheep, and another man has only a few sheep, while the more wealthy owner has larger flocks, but all are enclosed in what I will call the parish fold.

Now the morning comes, the sun is up early and so is the shepherd. The porter is at the door, and he recognizes the various sheep owners as they come down to the sheepfold to fetch their flocks. One shepherd comes and he takes away his little company, another shepherd arrives and he leads away a larger number. In each case, the shepherd has no trouble in separating his own sheep from the rest in the fold.

You and I would think it well-nigh impossible, and we certainly should never be able to divide those differing flocks, but the shepherd does it easily as soon as ever he comes to the door of the fold. There are certain of his sheep that love him much, they are accustomed to keep very near his hand, and often get the sweetest bits of grass, and they leap up at the very sound of his footsteps. They recognize his person, and they come straightway to the gate and are ready at once to go out to the pastures with him.

Some others, I am afraid the larger part of the flocks, are not quite so eager, but the shepherd speaks and they recognize his voice, and when he proceeds to name the sheep one by one, for this the Eastern shepherd literally does, and when he begins to call them out by name, you can see the fleecy creatures recognizing the tones of his voice and responding to his call as readily as dogs with us know their master's voice and their own names. The sheep thus called, push their way from among the different flocks, and they come out and follow their shepherd, who leads them to the pastures that he has provided or discovered for them.

Now, that is exactly what the good Shepherd does with His sheep. He comes to the door of the fold. Here we are to-night, like so many sheep in the enclosure. I cannot tell who among you may be Christ's sheep, or who may not be His. My voice has no power to separate you from your companions unless Christ shall use my voice, and make it the echo of His own.

I may speak as long as I will, apart from that great Shepherd of the sheep, but I can make no distinction between His chosen ones and the rest of mankind, but if the Lord Himself shall come and call, His chosen shall detect the gracious voice, and when one by one He calls them to Himself by what theologians term "effectual calling"—(and it is a good expression, for it *is* effectual calling), then the sheep hear His voice, and they rise up at once and follow Him, for they know His voice, and He leads them out.

I am going to speak upon this text, viewing it from three points.

I. The first point is that JESUS, THE GOOD SHEPHERD, OFTEN COMES INTO CONTACT WITH HIS SHEEP.

He has bought them, He has paid the full price of their redemption, He has laid down His life for His sheep, so that they are effectually ransomed, and He has gone up to heaven to plead for them and to present before His Father the memorials of His death. Yet He is still with them, according to His word, "Lo, I am with you alway." He has not left His sheep here below simply to the care of under-shepherds, much less are they in charge of hirelings. He has His under-shepherds, but He is with them and He still comes to His flock, He still calls His sheep by name, He still leads them out. Let us think of the various ways in which the good Shepherd still comes into contact with His sheep.

He came into contact with us, first *in our conversion*. He had come to us before by the many pleadings of His Spirit, and the many entreaties of His love in the days of our youth and in years gone by, but we did not then know His voice. Our ear was not open then, and we did not hear His call. He went after us into the wilderness, He sought us on the mountain steeps, but it was for a time a weary seeking, and little came of it.

Then, on a day never to be forgotten, He came with His effectual grace, I say HE came. Mother had come, teacher had come, pastor had come, books had come, sermons had come, but last of all, HE Himself came. Do you remember His coming? I can never forget the spot where He first met with me, and the tones of His voice, when at last He won my heart, are ringing as clearly in my ears tonight as though they were the marriage bells of yesterday.

I can never forget how that call sounded, "Look! Look! Look unto me, and be ye saved all the ends of the earth." Then I knew His voice and responded to it, through His own rich grace, and I was His and He was mine. It needed that He should do the wooing for Himself, and should unveil His own dear face, and then my heart was won, and my spirit yielded itself entirely to Him. You remember how it happened to you also, do you not? Think of it with joy and gratitude.

Since then, the Lord Jesus has often come to us *in guidance*. Many of us can say that He has guided us through all the pathway of life, and at certain times and at difficult turns of the road, He has come to us with such consoling counsel, and with such abounding compassion, that we have blessed Him and said, "He is truly near to me. How hallowed is this place! It is none other than the house of God, and the very gate of heaven."

There are some few saints who could not tell you when Christ is not with them because He is always with them, they never lose His company. I wish that I could be one of their number, yet might I almost claim that position, for it is a joy to me to be able to say that, habitually I do realize the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. I have said more to Him than to any other man. I have spent more time with Him than with any other that I have ever heard of, and my heart more joyously goes out to Him than to anyone beneath the sun.

You have perhaps seen the rooks on the ploughed land, all day going from field to field, and following the man with the plough. Where do they live? Where are their nests? Wait till near the going down of the sun and you shall see. Now they all mount with many a caw, and with hoarse converse with each other, and after they have hurried to and fro a while, away they go, where those old trees that stand around the ancient baronial hall, supply them with their house and home.

Now, such is Christ to some of us. We are necessarily abroad through the day, looking after this or that work which needs attention, but the moment we are at liberty, we know where our nest is. It is with the hearts of many of us as it is with the needle in the mariner's compass. Do you see it? It is pointing to the pole. If you will, you may put your finger on that needle and turn it round. It points East now, yes, you turn it round till it points South, but take your finger off, it is back at once to its true pole, so is it with our hearts. Our hearts are with Him on His throne, always magnetized and polarized for Christ, and we shall never rest until we get back to Him. He is in our first thoughts in the morning, and our last meditations at night, we can truly say—

*"I think of Thee, my God, by night,
And talk of Thee by day."*

*Thy love my treasure and delight,
Thy truth my strength and stay*

*“The day is dark, the night is long,
Unblest with thoughts of Thee,
And dull to me the sweetest song,
Unless its theme Thou be.”*

And beloved, you know how near the Lord is in the way of *sympathy*. It is no exaggeration where we read, “In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them.” You have sometimes been in sharp sickness, and have had “cruel pains,” as men call them, or you have perhaps known the sharper pangs of poverty, or possibly, though I hope it is not so, some of you know what it is to be deserted by your friends in the hour of your greatest need, and have to stand alone amid the pitiless blasts, when none seem willing to afford you shelter.

Oh, but we never fully know Christ till such a time as that! We never realize the sweetness of His sympathetic companionship till He stands by us and we can say with Paul, “At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me.” Yes, He may be a long way from the healthy and the strong sheep, but the good Shepherd is always near the sickly and the weak, and when the heart is breaking,

Christ always comes. He knew what heart-break meant, and desertion, and agony, and bloody sweat, so He can sympathize with us in our sorrows, and there is no hand so soft as that which was nailed to the cross. Jesus is quick as a mother to feel all the sufferings of His people.

I may also add that our Lord is always with us *in intercession*. This divine foresight takes the practical shape of pleading for us about troubles that are yet to come. You see Peter. Satan had desired to have him, that he might sift him as wheat, and Satan had not then gone any farther than desire. His malice is very quick, but still, at that time he had only desired to have Peter. Yet, when the devil had that desire, Christ had gone a long way beyond him, “But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.”

So quickly does the careful love of Christ outstrip all our necessities, that even the dark wings of the arch-enemy cannot fly so fast as the interceding love of our Arch-Friend, our chief Helper, our Best-beloved. He is always with you, watching to see not only what you do want, but what you will want, not only noting what are your dangers, but what are to be your dangers in the future. Before Satan has plucked the arrow from his quiver, and long before he has fitted it to the bow, Christ has already prepared that shield of interceding love that shall guard you from his attacks.

O sheep of Christ, can there be happier news for you than that the good Shepherd is always with you? He has said, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” Vineyard of the Lord, hear you this, and make a song of it, “I, the LORD do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.” Here is a song for the vineyard of red wine, let all the saints sing it in their hearts tonight.

So much then, upon that first point, that Jesus often comes into contact with His sheep.

II. Secondly, this also is clear from the text, that Jesus CALLS HIS SHEEP BY NAME, “He calleth his own sheep by name.”

You Thomas, you Mary, and Martha, and Lazarus, and you Matthew, the publican, yes, and you, Mary of Magdala, He calls you all by name! What does this imply?

The first thing that it means is *intimate knowledge*. Beloved friends, I used to have such a trustworthy memory that I not only knew the nearly six thousand members of this church by face, which I am still able to do, but I knew them all by name, and it was a rare thing for me to ever forget or make a mistake, save when certain ladies changed their names and I had not been made aware of it, but even then I soon rectified the error. But now sometimes, I find myself unable to remember all your names, perhaps it is because I do not see you often.

Our Lord knows all the myriads of His redeemed by name. There is no failure of memory with Him, and He sees them always. His eye and His heart are towards each one of His people both night and day, "He calleth his own sheep by name." I do not wish so much to preach upon this passage as I want you to put it into your mouth, or rather, to taste it with your spiritual palate, so as to get the flavor and sweetness of it. "I know my sheep," says the good Shepherd, He knows not only who they are, but *what* they are, and where they are. "He calleth his own sheep by name." This implies His intimate knowledge of them.

Does it not signify next, that if He calls us by our name, He is in the habit of speaking to us with *exceeding plainness*? He can so speak to us that we shall know what He means. His Word is dark and mysterious to outsiders, but when He makes us to be His sheep, He speaks very plainly, calling us by name. It is only when persons are on very familiar terms with one another that they address each other by their Christian name.

We are, all of us, Mr. Somebody, or the Reverend Mr. Somebody, or Dr. Somebody, or Squire Somebody, but when we are at home, we are none of us esquires, we are Richard, or Mary. Mother never thinks of calling us "Mr." and Father does not say "Miss," but they call us by our name. So the Lord Jesus Christ calls us by name to show how plainly He speaks with us, and also to let us see what gracious familiarity there is between the Head and the members of His mystical body, between the Bridegroom and His spouse, between the Well-beloved and His church which is so dear to His heart.

"He calleth his own sheep by name." I think this also means *intense personality*. When anything is directed to you by name, it comes to you as your own with great definiteness.

There is a story recorded of Mr. Rowland Hill which I have not seen printed in a book until just lately. It bears on its very face the tokens of truth, for it is just what he would be likely to do. He was accustomed, at family prayer, to pray for his servants by name, asking for such a blessing for Sarah, and such for Jane, and such for John, if his man-servant was present. There was a new cook engaged, her name was one which in those days was more common than it is now, it was "Biddy." So at prayer time, Mr. Hill prayed that God would bless Sarah, and the others, one by one, and would the Lord be pleased to save Biddy, and give her a new heart and a right spirit.

After prayer was over and the servants had gone away, there was a gentle knock at the study door, and the good minister said, "Come in, what is it?" "Please, Mr. Hill, I am very glad to be in your service, and I hope I shall find it a comfortable place, but would you kindly not mention my name in prayer? I have not been accustomed to it and I do not think I could bear it." "All right, Biddy," he said. "I try never to do anything that is displeasing. I am sorry you should be annoyed, and I must not mention your name in prayer again."

She went to her work and the next time of family prayer Mr. Hill prayed in the following manner. After having pleaded for blessings in general, He said, "Now, Lord, be pleased to bless Sarah and convert her, and lead her in Thy way," and so he mentioned the rest of them and then he added, "Lord, I may not ask Thee to bless Biddy because she earnestly requests that she may not be mentioned to Thee in prayer."

The prayer was over and there was again a knock at the door. "Come in," said Mr. Hill. It was that cook, again. "Please, Mr. Hill," she said, "I didn't want you to pray like that, I didn't want to be left out in prayer sir. Please, you may mention my name if you like." "Just so, Biddy," said he, "I will do it and God will bless you, I do not doubt."

Well now, there is a good deal in that way of personally mentioning people in prayer, because they then feel that you are praying for them, and when the Lord Jesus Christ calls His own sheep by name, they distinctly recognize that He speaks to them.

Have not some of you known what it is to be spoken to from this pulpit by the Lord Jesus Christ, quite as distinctly as if I had mentioned your name and address? You know you have. This is the way in which some of you were first brought to Christ. It was not merely to sinners, but to *you* as a sinner, it

was not merely to all men, but to *you* as distinctly singled out, that the Gospel of Jesus Christ came with power. To show the personality of His Gospel, He calls men by name.

This call also teaches us the *wonderful suitability* of Christ's words to our needs. There will often be in a text of Scripture, the very message that is needed by a poor wearied spirit. How often too, will the Lord prepare the mind of a hearer till the preacher's words shall be as suitable as if he had been told all about the unknown person!

Friends sometimes write to me and say, "We are going to bring a friend of such and such a sort to the Tabernacle." They let me know in the hope that I may make my message suitable. Do not let me know whom you bring, I do not want to know because I cannot suit my sermon to your friend. Bring your friend with your own hearty and earnest prayer, but without my knowing anything about it. God will speak through His servant what He wishes to have said, and it will come with greater force and power than any thoughtful love can suggest.

Oh, may God speak to some of you tonight! May you be called out by your name, and feel in your heart, "Jesus calleth me, and I will go to Him at once, and put my trust in Him"!

III. Now I am going to close with this third remark, THAT THIS CALL BY NAME COMES AT SPECIAL TIMES.

I will mention four special seasons when the Lord's personal call is heard.

First, it comes at *conversion*. I have perhaps already said enough about that. There is a call to sinners by name, the Gospel preached in general is all very well, but it is the Gospel preached in particular that saves men. If you have come in here tonight just to hear as one of a crowd, you will probably get nothing by coming, but when you sit here saying, "Lord, speak to me! Lord help me to apply every word to my own case! Help me to lay hold of every promise that is quoted!"—that is the way to gain the blessing!

They say that the times are improving and that business is looking up, but when I meet with a friend who is in a certain trade, he says, "Business is not looking up my way, I do not find that I have any more customers than I used to have, or that I can get the slightest increase of profit on my goods." Just so, friends, you do not profit by the general blessing, do you? You need a particular blessing to come to your own soul, for in this respect, as it is with temporal things, so it is with eternal things, we need the blessing for ourselves.

Now, in business we have to check this kind of selfishness, but in spiritual things we may excite it, for we want men to "covet earnestly the best gifts." One good old man said, "The Lord's people are a covetous people." "Oh!" said one, "they ought to get rid of all covetousness." "Yes," he answered, "except that spiritual covetousness to which we are exhorted by Paul, when he says, 'Covet earnestly the best gifts.'" That is quite true, we should covet earnestly the best things, even heavenly things. Seek these things for yourselves, and rest not satisfied until you have them. May the Lord by conversion call you by name, that you may have the first of these best gifts!

I have known Him, in the second place, call some by name to *fresh service*. Did He not say, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them"? Sometimes there is a Sunday school teacher wanted. There sits a young man in this place tonight who ought to be in the Sunday school, I shall not call him by name. Perhaps he would be offended if I did so, but I hope that the Lord will call him.

There sits a Christian woman here who should be engaged in the school, or who ought to take a tract district. Possibly there is a Christian woman here, of years and knowledge, who ought to be teaching a Bible class, or conducting a mothers' meeting. Perhaps I speak to some large-hearted man, with considerable ability, who spends all his time on his business and does no work for Christ. He ought to have a Mission Hall and support it himself, he has money enough, and he has talent enough.

Some of you have never had an idea of what you yet can do for the Lord, and the way to find it out is to try to do something for the Savior. There are too many "retiring" people among us, who are so retiring as to get to be lazy. Come out of your hiding place, my dear friend. No, I will not mention your

name, though I know some of this sort, and I have their names almost on my tongue, but I will not mention them, but I do pray the Master to mention your names so that you may consecrate your substance, your time, your ability, to the work of the Lord somewhere in this great perishing London, or somewhere in this great nation where so many perish for lack of knowledge. “He calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out” into wider spheres, into larger enterprises, into fuller consecration to His service. May He do that now with many of you, my brethren and sisters!

Sometimes the Lord calls His saints by name and leads them out into *higher attainments* in the divine life. Come, you who have been always halting, doubting, fearing, it need not be so with you! The Lord invites your faith to full assurance, and your love to enthusiasm, and your prayer to wrestling, and your desire to expectation, and your present imperfect service for Him to the complete dedication of yourself, body, soul, and spirit, to His cause.

We have not yet attained all we may reach, dear friends, there is a something yet beyond, and to this the Master calls us. “But I cannot rise to it,” says one. “With man it is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” You may be strong, useful, joyful, you need not always be weak, careless, and sorrowful. Oh, that there might come into your soul, by the breath of the Divine Spirit, an increase of spiritual life, till you shall have it more abundantly and shall bless and praise the name of the Lord!

But lastly, there will soon come another call to some of us, and we would be very, very slow to shrink from it, I mean the call *home to heaven*. I know not to whom it may come this week or next, but stand you all ready for it. It will come by the messenger appointed by Him who loves you, and who longs to have you where He is, that you may behold His glory. Perhaps the summons may come to you as it came to Christiana, with this token, “an arrow sharpened with love, let easily into her heart.” She knew what the token meant, and she welcomed her Lord’s call.

It will come in different ways. One aged Christian, who was dying of cancer, met another who was greatly suffering from another painful disease. “Well, well, my brother,” she said, “we must all have something to die of you know, or we should live here forever. Do not let us quarrel with the messenger the Lord sends.” He will send the proper messenger in His own good time, and in the right way.

Rowland Hill, whom I have already quoted, was sometimes very odd in his expressions. He went, when he was very old, to see a godly woman at Everton who was nearly ninety, and he told her that when she got home, he hoped she would mention him up there, for he had almost begun to think that they had forgotten him, he had grown so old that he would be glad to be going home to his dear Lord, and to see those blessed Johns—John the beloved disciple, and John Bunyan, and some other Johns that he mentioned. It was not long before he went home too, and he almost overtook her before she could deliver his message.

Well, whether we live to be as old as he, or die in middle life, or in the early days of our conversion, it does not matter. The Lord will send the messenger, and the messenger will know us, and we shall hear the voice that says, “Arise up, and come away.” I would have you standing with your wings outstretched, as the cherubim abode over the mercy seat, with their wings outspread, as if ready to fly at the divine bidding!

Are you afraid? Afraid of going home, dear child? Are you so fond of boarding school that you have no desire for the holidays? Are you afraid, dear heart, afraid of the wedding day, and of the Bridegroom, and of the everlasting joy? Soldier, are you afraid of the victory and the crown? No, no, instead of fearing, let us begin to anticipate the bliss of being “for ever with the Lord.”

God help us to joy and rejoice, wearing today by faith the chaplet which we shall soon wear in reality, striking even now the harp strings with the joyous fingers which, ere long, shall sweep the chords throughout eternity, as we sing, “Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

We will close our service by singing this verse—

“For ever with the Lord!”

*Amen! So let it be!
Life from the dead is in that word,
'Tis immortality!"*

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

John 10:1-31

Verse 1. *Verily, verily, I say unto you.*

When our Divine Lord and Master was about to speak with deep solemnity, He usually commenced His discourse by repeating the word, “verily,” “Verily, verily, I say unto you.” The authority of Christ is the basis of our religion. He does not quote from others, but He says, “Verily, verily, *I say* unto you.” Jesus is incarnate wisdom, He is God Himself, and what He says is infallibly true, and is to be accepted without question.

1. *He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.*

Those who professed to be the shepherds of the sheep, but did not come according to previous revelation by the way of the Old Testament types and prophecies, were nothing better than thieves and robbers. They could have no design in palming themselves off upon the people except to steal from them and to do them harm.

2-3. *But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth:*

John the Baptist was, so to speak, the porter who recognized the Christ, and opened the door to Him. John said concerning Jesus, when the Spirit abode upon Him, “I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.”

3. *And the sheep hear his voice:*

His chosen ones, those whom the Father had given Him, the peculiar people—“the sheep” at once recognized the presence of the Shepherd when they heard His voice.

3-4. *And he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him:*

“He goeth before them.” There is never an act prescribed by Christ for His followers but He first performs it Himself—“He goeth before them.” Other professed leaders drove the flock before them. The Jewish teachers laid heavy burdens upon men and grievous to be borne, which they themselves did not touch with one of their fingers.

It is the distinguishing mark of the good Shepherd that, “when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them.” You are not bidden to do as a servant what the Master would not do. Even if it is the menial occupation of washing the saints’ feet, He Himself has done it; you are to lay down your life for the brethren, for Jesus Himself has done that, “He goeth before them, and the sheep follow him.”

4. *For they know his voice.*

There is an instinct, a God-given instinct, in the elect of God, by which they know Christ’s voice. When once the Spirit of God has changed their natures, they have an open ear for the Words of Jesus, “the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.”

5. *And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.*

Others will follow the stranger, but the sheep will not do so. We read of some that they were full of such deceivableness that they would, if it were possible, deceive the very elect, but there is an “if it were possible.” The Lord’s true sheep cannot, will not, long be deceived, “they know not the voice of strangers.”

6. *This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them.*

We need not only to listen to Christ's words, but we need an interpreter to explain them to us. Jesus is needed to make His people understand His own teaching. He—

*“Is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain.”*

7. Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you,—

Still, you see, Jesus speaks with the same authority, He is an intense dogmatist, He leans not upon the arguments of human reason, nor upon the precedents of former teachers. Again He said just this, “Verily, verily, I say unto you,”—

7. I am the door of the sheep.

Is He both Shepherd and Door? Yes, and many other figures meet in Him, all creation cannot set Him forth completely. We may multiply all the types and symbols and analogies of nature, and yet not fully picture our Lord Jesus Christ. Dr. Watts truly wrote—

*“Nature, to make His beauties known,
Must mingle colors not her own.”*

We must know the Creator as well as the created, if we would set forth Christ to the full.

8. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.

Some people did hear them, one pretended messiah and another led different companies of deluded followers after them, “but the sheep did not hear them.” The prophetess Anna, the holy waiting Simeon, the guileless Nathanael—these did not hear them, their ears had not yet caught the mystic tone which belongs only to the true Shepherd's voice, “The sheep did not hear them.”

9. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

Is Christ the Door of salvation to you? Some teach that baptism is the door, others talk of a thousand things as being doors of salvation, but it is Christ alone who is *the* Door, and you must enter into salvation by simple trustful faith in Him. What does a sheep do in order to enter the fold? Does it perform any tricks? No, it simply goes in by the doorway. Poor wandering sheep, do you the same, for Jesus says, “By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture.”

10. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

You who have eternal life may have more of it. You may be spiritually stronger, more vigorous, more clear of eye, more happy of heart, more active in service. Life is a blessing, but abundant life is a greater blessing, we want not merely to breathe, just to live, as I saw one about an hour ago. He had life, but too little life even to speak, we want to have much life, that we may enjoy it, and may use it for the glory of God. Christ has come that we might have life more abundantly, may we all make use of His coming to that end!

11-13. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.

How many there are of whom we have reason to fear that they must be hirelings, because when they see false doctrine and error abroad, they do not oppose it! They are willing to put up with anything for the sake of peace and quiet. They flee as soon as they see the wolf, but he most copies his Master who will not flee on any terms. Certainly he will not flee when wolves are about, for is he not set for the defense of the sheep, that he may chase the wolf away, even though he gets to himself many a scratch and many a wound?

Our Master never fled from the wolves. He might have done so, our good Shepherd might have gone back to heaven and escaped Gethsemane, the cruel scourges, and the wounds upon the tree, but that was not His course of action. The sheep were His own, and therefore it was a joy to Him to interpose Himself between them and the destroyer, and He did so.

14-16. *I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold:*

Not yet brought in, still wandering away on the barren hills.

16. *Them also I must bring,—*

“I must,” says Jesus, and as men say, “*must* is for the king.” There is a divine necessity laid upon Christ our Savior, He must save the people, the sheep whom His Father gave Him, “them also I must bring.” Oh, wondrous love that holds even the Omnipotent Savior in bonds, and puts Him under the sacred constraint of this mighty “must,” “them also I must bring.”

16. *And they shall hear my voice;*

How like a king Jesus talks! It is the Royal Shepherd who says, “They shall hear my voice.” But suppose they will not hear it? “They *shall* hear my voice.” But suppose they stop their ears against the Gospel. “They *shall* hear my voice,” and Christ’s “shall” is always backed by omnipotence.

16-18. *And there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.*

Herein lay much of the effect of the death of Christ, that it was voluntary, that He had power to lay down His life, the right to lay it down, and the right to take it again. When any ordinary man dies, he only pays “the debt of nature.” If he were even to die for his friend, he would simply pay a little earlier that debt which he must pay ultimately, but the Christ was immortal, and He needed not to die except that He had put Himself under covenant bonds to suffer for His sheep.

19-26. *There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings. And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him? Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?*

And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon’s porch. Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father’s name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.

This was a brave utterance of our Lord. Those who are Christ’s chosen and redeemed people in due time come to believe in Him, but He does not say to the Jews, “You are not my sheep, because you do not believe.” He tells them the same truth in another way, “Your not believing is a proof that you are not my sheep.”

27-31. *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand. I and my Father are one. Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him.*

These are the ultimate arguments of unbelief—stones. There is no sense in stones, no reason in violence, yet ungodly men, when they have nothing else to use, throw stones at the Teacher of the truth. Is this generous? Is this wise? If you do not believe the testimony, at least let the Testifier alone. Yet it is not in the nature of men to do so. Their stones are ever ready when they are unable to answer the Christ. “Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him.” They had done it previously when He said unto them, “Before Abraham was, I am,” but as He escaped their malice then, so did He at this time.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—400, 496, 440

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